

THE SHORTWAVE YEAR 2001 IN REVIEW, by GLENN HAUSER
[expanded version; portions were on VOA Communications
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AFGHANISTAN

It took the tragedies of September eleventh and their consequences to revive public interest in shortwave radio. Grove, Universal and Grundig all report greatly increased sales.

The Taliban's Voice of Shariah was bombed off the air less than a month later, promptly replaced by the airborne U.S. psychological operations' Information Radio; and then by a more widely heard exile station based in London, Radio Voice of Afghanistan. As the year ended, the new Radio Afghanistan in Kabul was expecting new transmitters, and the US Congress had approved a Radio Free Afghanistan to start within a month, eventually via Kuwait.

LANGUAGES

Many western stations felt the need to expand broadcasts in Dari, Pashtu, Arabic and other Middle Eastern languages. Libya added Hausa for neighbors in Nigeria. FEBC dropped Cantonese for Mandarin. HCJB quit Japanese, but got a license to build a transmitter in Australia.

NAME CHANGES

Christian Voice, Australia, renamed itself Voice International, for stealthy evangelism into Asia. KHBN got a truly Palauan callsign, T8BZ. Radio P'yongyang became Voice of Korea. And Voice of Russia slowed down its interval signal.

NEW STATIONS

Lots of new stations emerged on shortwave in 2001.

In Chile, Radio Parinacota; in Uruguay, Banda Oriental; in Bolivia, Radio Ayopaya; In Peru, among others, Radio Nuevo Horizonte, LPC La Radio, Radio Americana, and Radio San Antonio; in Ecuador, Centro Radiofónico Imbabura; in Guatemala, Radio Amistad; in the USA, WWRB; in Somalia, Radio Baidoa; in China, Yushu PBS.

Many more new 'stations' are more like programs, buying time on existing transmitters: Voice of the Lord, from Manila via Germany; Radio Ezra, from England via somewhere, and lately Russia; Everest

Radio, for Nepalis, from Britain, via Austria; Radio Africa International from Austria, confusing itself with the Methodist station of the same name already, via Germany.

NEW CLANDESTINES

There were lots of new opposition radios, mostly buying time from existing non-clandestine transmitters in the USA, Britain, Germany, Russia, CIS. Mathias Kropf's annual report says there was a 4.7 percent increase in clandestine broadcasting time. Including:

For Nigeria: Voice of Biafra International, Salama Radio. For Eritrea and Ethiopia: Voice of Tigreans from North America, Voice of Our Martyrs, Netsanet Le Ethiopia Radio, Tigrean International Solidarity for Justice and Democracy, Voice of the Millennium. For Sudan, Voice of Freedom and Renewal. For Vietnam and Cambodia, Voice of Khmer Kampuchea Krom, Voice of Justice, and Radio Free Vietnam # 2; for Kurdistan and Iran, Radio Bopeshawa, Denge Mezopotamya, Radio Payam-e Doost; for Chechnya, Radio Chechnya Svovobodnaya, then Radio Kavkaz. And just started for Zimbabwe, SW Radio Africa.

STATIONS GONE FROM SHORTWAVE

We gained many, but we also lost some stations: La Voz de la Fundación, and I think, Colombia's Voz de la Resistencia; HRET Honduras; CHNX, Halifax; IBB at Playa de Pals, Spain; AWR, Forlì, Italy; Malawi and Kenya; JJY timesignals from Japan, and VNG Australia may be next.

BACK ON SHORTWAVE

But a number of countries and stations were heard again in 2001 after an absence: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, and Laos; Radio Bayrak, Northern Cyprus, Idea Radio from Colombia instead of Italy; Radio Apintie, Suriname; All India Radio from Jeypore; Rádio Ecclésia, Angola, this year via Germany instead of Holland; Voice of Croatia, also via Germany; Rádio Taubaté in Brazil; Radio Marañón and thanks to an earthquake, Radio Tacna in Perú.

MORE AND MORE RELAYS

As some national broadcasters cut back, transmitter time became available for others wanting a closer shot at their targets, to the benefit of everyone. For example, Sweden and Holland now via Canada; RVi via lots of sites, but no longer Belgium itself. AWR added Austria to Slovakia. Abu Dhabi became available for many relays, even American missionaries, as well as Japan and Australia, which also started using Singapore and Tinian as well as Taiwan, and even Darwin again. And Poland's ailing transmitters may soon give way to relays abroad.

SHORTWAVE EXPANSIONS AND CONTRACTIONS

Swiss Radio International continued its planned obsolescence of shortwave, despite few hits at its Swissinfo website, ending broadcasts to North America, Europe and Australia.

The biggest scandal of the year was BBC cutting off shortwave to North America and Australia at mid-year, and, the way they went about it.

Another media program ceased broadcasts, but continued on internet, MediaScan from Sweden.

WJCR disappeared from Kentucky, pending new ownership, and lots of transmitter work. HCJB trimmed its programming, but added a direct broadcast to India. Cairo has one or two new transmitters capable of listenable audio. Adrian Peterson counts 35 new shortwave transmitters under construction in Africa.

China has been filling up the bands with 34 new transmitters, from the American manufacturer Continental, plus a few more for Vietnam, allowing these countries to continue to lead the world in jamming, along with Cuba.

Austria had to cut its staff and original programming, especially in German, but with a greatly reduced budget remains on shortwave; Finland is doing us a favor by retaining one broadcast in English to North America. Canada is making a gradual comeback after unexplained cuts. VOA was persuaded not to cut as many languages as the outgoing administration ordered. Radio Norway stays on the air only by relaying domestic output; ditto an overlooked gem, Radio Educación in Mexico City.

WORST ENGINEERING

Two of its neighbors take the cake for worn out transmitters, Radio Mexico International, with spurs stronger but more distorted than the fundamental; and XERTA wandering all over the 60 meter band. Dubai can't decide which side of Sa'udi Arabia to be on 13 meters.

Some maladjusted transmitters let us hear nearby stations by mistake: WWL via WRNO; Radio Popular, Venezuela via YVTO; China television via French Guiana.

STRIKES AND STRIFE

Technicians on strike disrupted programming at CBC and RCI; journalists at Radio France Internationale. Vatican Radio was absolved of

electrosmog at its transmitter site, but not before starting to reduce output from Italy.

ANNIVERSARIES

Shortwave is showing its age, with anniversaries like these in 2001: the Benelux DX Club reached 40; Radio Prague, Radio Warsaw/Polonia, and Radio Yugoslavia all became 65, but Belgrade's transmitter in Bosnia came back on in May, went back off in December, they say for only a month. HCJB just celebrated 70 years of Heraldng Christ Jesus' Blessings.

We marked the centennial of Marconi's trans-Atlantic spark-gap DX, but barely noticed the 101st anniversary of Reginald Fessenden's first voice transmission.

INNOVATIONS

Let's recognise some good ideas stations have tried: European pirate, Radio Borderhunter, tested very low power to North America, successfully heard by David Hodgson at only 100 milliwatts on 15 MHz. Radio Ukraine International tried to use its megawatt transmitter, but the authorities prefer to let the Russians use several Ukrainian transmitters again, to the detriment of RUI. Saint Petersburg testing to North America, first with Radio Gardarika, lately Radio Center. Live from Turkey, a weekly call-in. WWFV started broadcasts in radioteletype. Digital Radio Mondiale continues testing the short-wave of the future, oblivious to complaints that it's too close to the analog shortwave of the present.

WEBCASTING

Among the shortwave stations which added or upgraded webcasting this year were RFPI, HCJB, Havana and Taiwan. Many of the newest stations, especially clandestines, include internet audio as a matter of course.

COMMITTED TO SHORTWAVE

We're happy to note a number of stations asserting or demonstrating their commitment to shortwave, improving or expanding programming and/or equipment: Radio Prague, Radio Netherlands, Voice of Nigeria, Voice of Mesopotamia, Radio Vilnius, FEBC Manila. RAE Argentina revived a second transmitter, but to little avail. Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez got a talkshow on shortwave thanks to his pal Fidel, but not heard lately. Radio for Peace International began a new campaign called Stop Hate on Radio.

OBITUARIES

Deceased, William Cooper, The Hour of the Time, in a shootout with police; gone without a trace, and most wanted, after another shootout, Steve Anderson of United Patriot Radio.

We are saddened by a longer list than usual of broadcasters and shortwave hobby luminaries who died in 2001: Roger Legge of VOA and the USSR High Frequency Broadcast Newsletter; Nikolai Pashkevich in Moscow; Vera Sarkany of Radio Budapest; Ramón Mendezona of Radio España Independiente; Douglas Adams, Hitchhiker at the BBC; Bob Thomalski of Media Network; Bob Beukema, the Voice of HCJB; David Briggs, who built KCBI; Larry Shewchuk of Manitoba; and Samuel Weiner, without whom, his son's station WBCQ would not exist.

As the year ended, Mother Angelica of Eternal Word was under intensive care.

PERSONNEL

Notable personnel changes include: Herminio San Román, out at Radio Martí; Salvador Lew, in at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. Judy Massa retired from Border Crossings at VOA. The VOA Directorship passed from Sandy Ungar to Robert R. Reilly with Myrna Whitworth acting in between. At Deutsche Welle, Dieter Weirich was replaced by Erik Betterman, who foresees a reduction to 5 or 6 major languages. Turnover too at RCI, from Robert O'Reilly to Denis Doucet to Jean Larin. Bill Matthews is now retiring as DX reporter for AWR and RKI.

IMAGINARY, or UNFULFILLED STATIONS

There was excitement about these new stations, except no one ever heard them: Radio UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, Radio Kahuzi in the DR Congo. Still on the way, we are assured, are KBBN in Papua New Guinea; an IMF missionary station in Piñón, New Mexico, and Al Weiner's maritime mobile bound for Belize. But once again this year, what is going on with Earth One, still registering frequencies, but never appearing; and from Radio Free Asia, we're *still* waiting on Wu.

For VOA News Now, I'm Glenn Hauser.

P.S. from Kim Elliott:

Glenn: Thanks.

Sorry to spoil your tradition, but apparently RFA has a Wu segment within its Mandarin broadcast. It's largely unadvertised and not listed as a separate language. As such, I guess you can keep your Wu closing as it is. 73 Kim